



Good afternoon Chair, Vice Chair, and Committee members. My name is Andrew Masters and I am here today on behalf of the United Way of Central Maryland. For nearly 100 years, United Way has been working across our region to meet the critical needs of individuals, households, and families. One of our keystone areas of work has been our efforts in neighborhoods.

This work aligns closely with the ENOUGH Act that the committee is considering. We at United Way of Central Maryland are for this bill and hope the committee gives it a favorable vote. The intergenerational, place-based approach that the ENOUGH Act supports aligns closely with our approach to community building and resident leadership. We support this bill and its aim to develop cross-sector partnerships. This approach recognizes the depth and breadth of complicated factors that families who battle poverty must overcome. These place-based strategies have been shown to be successful in other areas of our country and we look forward to supporting the ENOUGH Act making a difference here in Maryland.

A few years ago, United Way launched our Neighbors United initiative as a structured way to grow our neighborhood zones approach. Through this initiative, we partner with community organizations to support and strengthen the leadership capabilities of residents in neighborhoods like Severn, Lansdowne, Aberdeen, Columbia, and Mondawmin to address the upstream issues, or root causes, of the challenges residents face.

Our work in these communities has resulted in residents feeling more ownership over their communities and increased their sense of leadership and wellbeing. When residents partner with organizations like United Way, community-based organizations, governmental agencies, and other stakeholders, these communities see deep and lasting changes. Addressing these upstream issues is critical to ensuring that the work of these collaboratives results in community-wide impact.

Residents like Mr. Eric and Ms. Sandy have expressed that, because of Neighbors United, they feel they really have a voice and the power to make the changes they want to see in their communities. They are able to work with partners, talk to elected officials, and engage their neighbors to bring about the changes they want to see. In fact, Mr. Eric and other neighbors have formed a new organization called Man Up that is working towards nonprofit status as the result of this community power building. This summer, the community went over 100 days without a shooting, a major milestone for this neighborhood. They will remain focused on making the changes they want for their community now and in the future.

Thank you.